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I'm honored to have this opportunity to talk about the progress that Pennsylvania has made over the past several years in not simply reforming its corrections system, but beginning to transform its corrections system.

That transformation began with a specific goal and that goal is to reduce crime.

Every decision throughout our corrections system must keep one target in mind: that when someone leaves one of our prisons and is successfully reintegrated into the community, we've proactively impacted crime.

In order to accomplish this goal, it was essential that we established a baseline, which is the recidivism rate. However, instead of measuring recidivism by the rate at which offenders who are released return to custody within three years, we added the component of re-arrest in consult with our goal to reduce crime. We utilized our baseline as the combination of those individuals who were both re-arrested and re-incarcerated within three years. This baseline was an important central step in, first, signaling to the system that we expect outcomes, and second, providing the foundation for the introduction of performance contracting in aspects of our operation. Additionally, through the use of GIS technology, we mapped exactly where offenders were returning, looking both at individuals and clusters of returnees. From there, we could work toward aligning our resources where they were needed.

The next finite step was to identify data in the form of research to guide every decision throughout the process. The first aspect we focused on was ensuring that we added scientific assessment, or objective risk assessment, throughout the system. Through our justice reinvestment initiative, we funded the development of a risk-based sentencing tool by the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing to give judges data in which to make those critical placement decisions. An assessment review of offenders was done at the front door, upon entering our system, where we found a significant amount of discretion drifting away from the research. We re-initiated risk/need responsibility principle assessments and ensured they were completed with fidelity. At the back end of our system, the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole (PBPP) assesses individuals prior to release in an effort to determine risk levels upon reentry into the community. Finally, the community corrections centers are required to assess individuals upon arrival. This has culminated into the ability to more thoroughly assess individuals throughout their journey within the Pennsylvania criminal justice system.

Historically, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC) has offered a number of robust evidence-based programs available for the inmate population. However, even the most vigorous system requires objective reviews to make sure the needs of the offender are being met. Therefore, the assessment process of varying programs continues with an eye toward implementation in a manner that allows for random assignment whenever possible to provide authoritative research and the most accurate predictability of the research or the results of the research. Additionally, we really stepped out of our "kingdom," if you will, and enlisted the aid of the Department of Labor and Industry to review our vocational offerings to better ensure that an ex-offender will acquire and maintain a job based upon one of the 90 to 100 skillsets we offer to the general population.

In 2009, we commissioned research with the University of Cincinnati which found that 95 percent of the programs offered by the halfway houses resulted in offenders leaving the centers with a higher recidivism rate than offenders going directly to the street. It was clear that we had some work to do in this area. Prior to evaluating the halfway houses, we reviewed the DOC's responses, specifically what the department was doing to prepare offenders to go into either the community or a halfway house, and identify things that were barriers to individuals being successful. We then developed an interactive resource map, to be given to offender leaving via "cloud technology," jump drive and ultimately a smart phone app, aiding them in finding resources that will aid their re-entry.

One of the more simple, yet impactful, implementations is to ensure the issuance of Department of Transportation identification cards prior to release. Prior to our administration, 20,000 individuals were released with 380 IDs; last year, we released more than 9,000 with IDs. It was as simple as developing a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Transportation and then putting an emphasis on it. The release of offenders with their IDs enables them to connect with services that are available to them more readily, thereby removing an imposing barrier.

We then looked at individuals who received positive paroling actions yet weren't released from jail. It was determined that the vast majority of those offenders did not have an approved home plan and, consequently, left them sitting in a jail cell. We tackled this problem in a couple of ways. First, we developed a housing voucher program that provides a security deposit and six months' rent for individuals who were low- to low-medium risk that lacked a

home plan. When doing a cost benefit analysis on this approach, we found that at the time we were spending, on average, \$70 a day for a halfway house with 90 days as the average length of stay. In other words, we were spending about \$3,600 to put someone in a halfway house.

For low- and low-medium risk offenders in particular, that group had bad outcomes because they're lower risk. Keep in mind the risk/needs principle - low risk offenders do not need the services of a halfway house - as a matter of fact, it makes them worse. By carving this group out, we create a capacity in our halfway houses, and we also made a better investment that puts them a step close to housing permanence.

The other benefit to this approach was instead of taking our entire community corrections budget and spending it for a residential halfway house, we used a portion of this money to pay local landlords. Specifically, we put a bid out for regional housing with the intention of establishing relationships with local landlords, and by doing so, we're also investing in the infrastructure in the community.

We also did a study in 2009 on technical parole violators, individuals who came back without a new charge, but had violated some term or condition of release. We conducted focus groups with those who came back and those who didn't. The one significant difference between the group who came back and the group who didn't, was that the group who didn't return to prison had someone identified as a mentor. We then, first of all, through the justice reinvestment legislation, specifically authorized the department to contract with non-profits and faith-based community organizations, and then worked with those groups to provide mentors.

The mentoring program is structured in such a way that mentors can come into the prison two months before an individual is released and follow them for four months after they're released to provide that positive community connection. Again, this is not to supplant halfway houses or other re-entry initiatives, but to augment these services so that it's possible for an individual to be released, go to a halfway house, and have a mentor to work them through that difficult transition period.

Next, we looked at our halfway house system. And again, first we looked internally. What we found was that we were putting offenders in halfway houses that were not in their home community. As a matter of fact, in some cases, we were putting them in houses on the other

side of the state. In the context of community corrections, the community piece is with a big "C." It's important that we re-engage positive community supports that are already present for offenders, or develop positive community supports for offenders going back, and it's more likely to happen if they return to their communities. As a department, we made that change internally.

The second thing we did was establish minimum standards, again driven by the data and research, things like making sure individuals were assessed to ensure that there was cognitive behavioral therapy interventions available for them in the halfway house. We established minimum standards to say every halfway house in our system will have this program.

That being said, the crown jewel of our approach was to utilize the recidivism study that we did as a baseline early on in our administration where we rebid all of the community corrections contracts with an embedded performance measure. Specifically, in every halfway house we look at the actual risk makeup of the offenders and, based on the number of participants, we identified each center as a low, medium, or high risk. This provides a baseline recidivism rate for low, medium and high centers.

We have a performance measure in the contract that's structured in a way that if the offender leaves between one standard deviation above or below the mean, or the average recidivism based on the risk of that center, the provider is in good standing with the department. If the offender leaves the center with a lower recidivism rate than the makeup of that facility - they get a 1 percent bonus. If the recidivism rate of an offender is increased when they leave the center, more than one standard deviation away from the mean, the halfway house gets one warning period and, if it happens a second time, the community corrections center loses the contract.

Again, through this study we were able to develop with some certainty a measurable six-month recidivism rate so we could get an important component through quick feedback to the centers. In the first marking period, we have had very good news. Overall, offenders going back to the halfway houses have seen a 2 percent reduction in their recidivism rate. This equates to about 58 less crimes for a quarter of a year.

Beyond that, we have had 10 centers that earned the bonus by reducing recidivism rate for offenders going through their system beyond one standard deviation from the mean. We only

had one center in the warning period that saw an increase in the recidivism rate. The one thing that's very clear, and again, it's early on, is that our partners are now paying attention to recidivism and expecting outcomes.

Finally, we did a review of what leads people being violated back to the DOC. When violated on technical violations, they were spending between nine and 14 months in a state prison.

In conducting focus groups and talking to parole officers, the constant and continuous feedback received was a lack of a good continuum of services for offender placement.

In other words, if an offender started to use drugs, parole officers really didn't have the ability to get them into a rehabilitation program on a regular basis. We looked at what parole officers needed and conducted a non-residential outpatient group that included drug and alcohol treatment as well as cognitive behavioral therapy, mental health treatment, sex offender treatment and day reporting centers - these are all non-residential.

What we're suggesting is lower cost interventions that parole officers can use in lieu of bringing an offender back to a state prison. Also, if an offender needs help with treatment in the community on their way out of incarceration, we have the ability to do it.

In summation, we first established a goal of crime reduction. We were determined to use our corrections system to do exactly what we say we do, which is to correct people.

Then we established a baseline with good, honest research on recidivism.

We then inserted science by inserting objective risk assessment throughout our system. And again, we continue to use research to affirm, knowing that we're delivering our programs with fidelity.

Finally, we specifically identified barriers to success for offenders on the back end of the system and restructured our system to be consistent with the goal of a successful re-entry.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to talk about the work we've done in Pennsylvania and I hope that the Federal Bureau of Prisons can utilize some of this approach to better their system and better the outcomes for their offenders.

Thank you.

